



The most important thing to know about Queer Thoughts in Chicago was that the gallery could have easily been bigger. At each opening, clouds of young visitors floated in a large open space with pretty windows and comfortable proportions, waiting to seep awkwardly into the exhibition space: a tiny L-shaped closet lit by too-bright fluorescents and interrupted by two big doors. This spirit, a kind of willful marginality that embraces self-sabotage as both strategy and style, is the easiest lens through which to profile QT and its two proprietors, Luis Miguel Bendaña and Sam Lipp.

Bendaña and Lipp are both actively exhibiting artists, but they abdicate the convenience of positioning their gallery as “artist run,” and are known to at least as many people as dealers. A hierarchy in either direction would make life more comfortable for all involved, be it as dealers who make art or artists who also have a gallery. But so far they have chosen neither to rank their aspirations, instead slipping in and out of each costume according to situation and thereby complicating their efforts in either role.

The dozens of artists who filled their little L from 2012 to 2014 are not easy either: looking back, you can watch the arc of their program resist palpable urges to cohere around certain styles or clusters of friends, instead forming a maze of abrupt perpendicular turns. In particular, Mindy Rose Schwartz and David Rappeneau, both given solo exhibitions in 2014 and frequently included in off-site projects and art fairs, could be a pair of twin mascots for the gallery, appropriately the first two artists that the gallery has flirted with representing. At a

Queer Thoughts is a contemporary art gallery, directed by Luis Miguel Bendaña and Sam Lipp, aiming to promote a post-identity agenda within artistic practice.

Queer Thoughts recently relocated to New York's Tribeca, with an inaugural group show entitled “The End of Violent Crime.” In September, the gallery will host a solo presentation by Puppies Puppies.

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Portrait of Luis Miguel Bendaña and Sam Lipp
Photo credit:
Alistair Matthews

glance, their output is often quite similar: lightly colored and white, heavily stylized, cartoonish figuration. Beyond that surface, however, they are almost perfectly opposed in personality—and, as such, truly embody the spirit of QT.

Rappeneau is fashionably cold, both in the bleak and jaded drama of his drawings and in his withholding approach to the art world, not merely avoiding it but restricting the circulation of any biographical information that might humanize him beyond his gender and locale (France). Rose Schwartz, a longstanding professor and participant in Chicago, is so compelling because she is so awkwardly warm, so craftily resistant to the cultural forces that Rappeneau embodies, and so locally familiar. As the press release for her show began, “Mindy Rose Schwartz is a sculptor, and she is sincere.” It’s hard to imagine the same person falling in love with both of them—and yet they are the foundation on which the gallery’s future will be built.

This relentless instinct to contradict themselves and subvert any clear identity or direction, to shoot themselves in the foot, is what makes Queer Thoughts so exciting to me. The generation they represent is easily stereotyped as strategically niche, trend-obsessed, and therefore generic and predictable. Bendaña and Lipp instead embrace difficulty and conflict as a means of creating richness, ultimately creating a more robust context for their artists. In that spirit, I applaud what might be the biggest bloody hole to decorate that foot so far: the opening of the new Queer Thoughts in Manhattan in August, just when things were going so well in Chicago. ☹

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